

MARCH 2022

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



Monthly Meeting, March 24, 2022

6:30–8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Lone Burden Conference Center
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

Kevin Folivi, HSABR Intern: Distilling Herbal Oils (see details on p. 2)

Herb of the Month— Tarragon, *Artemisia dracunculus*

Tarragon is a perennial Eurasian herb in the sunflower family, native to western Asia and Russia. Tarragon's specific epithet, *dracunculus*, means "little dragon." This may refer to the plant's serpentine, coiled root system or that the leaves are shaped like a dragon's tongue, or it may allude to tarragon's once being used to treat venomous bites from spiders and snakes. The subspecies *A. dracunculus* var. *sativa* is cultivated for use as a culinary herb. More info on p. 3.

Message from the Chair

Herb Day has come and gone, leaving in its wake satisfied customers, a plethora of new plants in the community, and a tidy profit for our Unit! It was a magnificent effort on the part of many people both in planning and executing the primary sale and the follow-up sale the following Saturday. A good job was done by all...and it showed!

Now it is time to move forward with our next items of business, which include our program calendar for the year and the initial planning for the 2023 Herb Society of America Education Conference (EDCON). Much like Herb Day, EDCON will be an “all hands-on deck” kind of activity that will show off the efforts and talent of our local unit along with exciting presentations by experts in various fields. As you can, please get in on the ground floor of the EDCON planning process by contacting Mary Williams and letting her know your availability and areas of interest.

This month, Kevin Folivi, one of our Unit Interns, will be talking about essential oils and the delightful aqueous condensates from the distillation process called hydrosols! Through extensive research coupled with practical experience, Kevin has developed a keen interest in distillation. Be there for this exciting program!

Our primary objective of promoting the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs extends to related areas, such as sustainable habitat awareness, a focus on native herbs and plants, and many other areas represented by the botanical world around us. Join us as we continue of a marvelous journey of discovery promoting a pleasurable present and a greener future! 🌿

— Art Scarbrough, HSABR Chair

Monthly Meeting

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Distilling Herbal Oils. Kevin Folivi, HSABR Intern, has been learning about the process of distilling essential oils from herbs using steam extraction and will share his knowledge with us!

He'll talk about the techniques he's learned, along with the equipment needed and how to set it up. Kevin will go over the steps in distilling essential oils and hydrosols and will tell us about other products that can be made with the distillates. He also plans a live demonstration of the steam-distillation process and will distill some oils so we can see the processes in action.

In addition, Kevin will give a brief history of distillation and how the process has changed over time, as well as something of the chemistry behind essential oils and the wonderful compounds that make them so delightful.

As always, visitors and guests are welcome. Admission is free for HSABR members, \$5 for all others. Please bring small bills if possible. 🌿

Herb of the Month: Tarragon, *Artemisia dracunculus*

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- In medieval lore, tarragon was placed in the shoes of those embarking on a pilgrimage to give them strength.
- There are a number of species referred to as tarragon that are distinctly different from each other:
 - French tarragon, *Artemisia dracunculus* var. *sativa*, is the type typically used for culinary purposes because of its distinctive anise-like flavor. It rarely flowers and is most often propagated through root division and cuttings or transplants.
 - Russian tarragon, *A. dracunculoides*, closely resembles French tarragon but it does flower and set seed, has rougher leaves, and does not have an appealing flavor.
 - Mexican tarragon, *Tagetes lucida*, is in the same family as the marigold. This plant is also known as Texas tarragon or Mexican mint marigold since the flavor of the leaves are similar to French tarragon. It is popular in Texas and other warm climates where French tarragon does not grow well.
- French tarragon is noted for use in the French blend *fines herbes*. It is essential to Béarnaise sauce as well as hollandaise sauce. It is added to marinades and rubs and pairs well with egg dishes, vegetables, poultry, fish, cheeses, and fruit.
- Tarragon is a perennial that grows best in a sunny, dry location with average, well-drained soil. It will tolerate partial shade, especially in warmer climates but does not do well in the deep South. Frequent pruning encourages bushy growth.
- Tarragon has had historical medicinal uses to treat issues such as intestinal worms, toothaches, hiccups, indigestion, joint pain, and water retention to name a few. Today tarragon is known for being an antioxidant with antiseptic, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and antiviral qualities.
- Tarragon is used in commercial flavoring as well as in the cosmetology and perfume industries.



Tips for using tarragon:

- Use fresh tarragon when possible since it loses flavor when dried.
- Add fresh tarragon sprigs to pickling brine.
- Tarragon bruises easily so handle gently and chop with single strokes.
- Add fresh tarragon towards the end of cooking time or raw for best flavor. The flavor turns bitter if cooked too long.
- Fresh tarragon makes a tasty garnish alongside of or sprinkled on salads and many other dishes. 🌿

Recipes

Tarragon Vinegar

Tarragon, stems and leaves

White wine vinegar

Optional: garlic, thyme, chives or other herbs

Wash tarragon and any other herbs and pat dry. Loosely fill a clean canning jar with tarragon or combination of herb sprigs. Using a wooden spoon, gently bruise the tarragon. Add the vinegar. Cover with a noncorrosive lid (such as plastic wrap followed by jar lid or a cork) and store in a cool dark place for 2–3 weeks to let flavors develop.

Strain and discard herbs. Pour into a sterilized decorative bottle. Add additional tarragon if desired. Store in a cool dark place for up to 6 months.

Use vinegar in potato, chicken, or tuna salads and to make vinaigrettes and marinades.



Tarragon Butter

1 cup softened butter

2 teaspoons fresh tarragon, minced

1 teaspoon fresh parsley, minced

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

Work herbs and lemon juice into the softened butter. Cover tightly and refrigerate until ready to use.



— Marie G. Fowler, HSA Arkansas Unit

Creamy Tarragon Sauce

This sauce is like a creamy Béarnaise sauce except it skips the butter, egg yolks, and fuss. It's spiked with lemon juice, zesty Dijon mustard, and of course, tarragon. Try it with poached eggs or even grilled steak.

½ cup low-fat plain yogurt

6 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise

4 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon, or 1 teaspoon dried

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon water

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

¼ teaspoon salt

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Whisk yogurt, mayonnaise, tarragon, lemon juice, water, mustard, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Make ahead tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.



— Eating Well Test Kitchen
Eatingwell.com

Help Make Our Meetings Better!

We're looking for members who will volunteer to do a short talk (no more than 10 minutes) at some of our monthly meetings to introduce our audience to different herbs. This doesn't need to be a big, complicated lecture...just a few tips on growing and harvesting the herb, along with some common uses, will be great. It's not required, but handouts and samples of dishes featuring your herb are very welcome! Please contact [Art Scarbrough](#), unit chair, if you'd like to do one of these presentations, so he can get you on the agenda for the meeting!



Sensory Garden Maintenance

Maintenance sessions for the Sensory Garden at the Independence Botanical Garden, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, are on Thursday mornings. Any and all are welcome, even if you can come only occasionally. If you can help keep the largest herb garden in this area looking its best, please contact [Judy Hines](#).

Unless otherwise specified, monthly meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month from January through October, at the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Lone Burden Conference Center, 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA., from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Visitors and guests are welcome. Admission is free for HSABR members, \$5 for all others.

HerbLetter is a monthly publication of the Baton Rouge Unit of the Herb Society of America, for and by its members and friends. For questions, comments, corrections, or to submit articles, announcements, or photos, please write hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com. Items must be received by the 10th of each month for inclusion in the next issue of HerbLetter.

Disclaimer: It is the policy of The Herb Society of America, Baton Rouge Unit, not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. Information offered in this newsletter is for educational purposes only. Neither the Herb Society of America nor the Baton Rouge Unit (HSABR) makes medical claims or dispenses medical advice. Women who are pregnant or nursing, and persons with known medical conditions, should consult their licensed healthcare provider before taking any herbal product. HSABR neither endorses nor is in any way responsible for the content of links shared here. Readers must do their own research concerning the safety and usage of any herbs or supplement

Upcoming Events

April 28, 2022

MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Amber Ryan: Pickles, Jams, and Jellies